

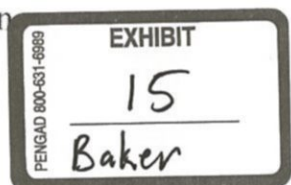
PSJ4 SOL Opp Exh 15

Testimony of Captain Hylton Baker, Summit County Drug Unit

Chairman Latta and distinguished members of this committee, my name is Hylton Baker, and I am a Captain with the Summit County Sheriff's Office. I am currently the commander of the Summit County Drug Unit, a multi-jurisdictional Drug Task Force. I have been employed as a deputy sheriff for more than 25 years. I have been assigned to narcotics investigations for more than sixteen years. I currently serve as the president of the Ohio Task Force Commander's Association. I would first like to thank the committee for its attention to the current plight of Ohio's Law Enforcement Task forces. Additionally, I would like to thank you for this opportunity for input from law enforcement actively involved in drug enforcement and task force operations.

Ohio's Drug Task Forces

The concept of the drug task force was established in Ohio in the late 1980's to allow specialized drug enforcement on a county or district -wide basis. This initiative has proven both economical and successful and provide a structure for cost effective collaboration between law enforcement agencies from multiple jurisdictions, allowing individual law enforcement agencies to pool resources and achieve greater outcomes collectively than



most of Ohio's local law enforcement agencies can achieve singularly. Many dangerous and violent large scale drug dealers and their organizations have been investigated, prosecuted and incarcerated. Our communities are safer today because of the task force initiatives.

Currently, Ohio's twenty-seven task forces (reduced from thirty-five since 2001) represent a unique niche in the law enforcement community. Task forces are responsible in not only street level drug investigations, but they also initiate investigations into large complex conspiratorial criminal enterprises, including but not limited to; theft, burglary, homicides, gambling and money laundering. It should be noted that money laundering is the most commonly encountered form of terrorist activities observed in the State of Ohio. The expertise found in these task forces is often utilized by law enforcement agencies throughout the state, supplementing their missions, already taxed beyond their means to investigate criminal activity that would otherwise be permitted to flourish.

As information, communication, and transportation technology continues to shrink our world, criminals continue to expand their presence across jurisdictional boundaries. As you will hear today, Ohio's task forces have reported encounters with drug traffickers and/or drug trafficking organizations from not only across the United States but Asia, Africa,

Canada, Europe, Mexico, South America and areas of the Caribbean Sea. Now more than ever, law enforcement must work diligently to meet these dynamics by expanding local reach to a broader regional focus. Ohio's task forces provide a proven, cost-effective mechanism for local law enforcement to conduct investigations across multiple jurisdictions. Ohio's task forces partner with State and Federal agencies to include but are not limited to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Housing & Urban Development (HUD), United States Marshal's Service, United States Coast Guard, United States Postal Inspection Service, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification & Investigation (BCI&I), Ohio Board of Pharmacy, Ohio Adult Parole Authority and the Ohio National Guard-Counter Drug Operations.

In calendar year 2006 Ohio's task forces operated in 60 of Ohio's 88 counties, and performed county wide operations in 55 of those counties. More than 550 local law enforcement agencies either participated in or relied on the services provided by the task forces receiving federal funds.

Task Force Statistics

During the period 2001 through 2006 Ohio's task forces initiated 41,088 new cases, arrested 30,832 suspects and encountered 1,267

clandestine methamphetamine sites. Currently Ohio ranks sixth in the seizure of methamphetamine sites. These numbers are the direct result of the dedicated men and women serving on task forces, gathering intelligence, investigating, locating and dismantling these toxic sites. The removal of illicit drugs from Ohio's streets and neighborhoods includes more than 724 kilograms of powdered cocaine, more than 124 kilograms of crack cocaine, processed marijuana in excess of 64,700 pounds, more than 70,000 cultivated marijuana plants, over 22.5 kilograms of heroin, 22.9 kilograms of methamphetamine, and more than 11,000 dose units of LSD. During 2006 alone more than 12,300 units of pharmaceutical drugs were seized and over 133,600 were found to have been diverted. In all Ohio's task forces have removed more than \$253.4 million dollars worth of illicit and prescription drugs from Ohio's streets.

The Future of Ohio's Task Forces

Federal funding for the nations drug task forces including Ohio initially came from the Byrne Memorial grant. Unfortunately this funding source is drying up. The proposed budget for calendar year 2008 completely eliminates Byrne and Justice Assistance Grants (JAG) funding and provides only a mere \$102 million for the C.O.P.S. program nationwide. Combined Byrne and JAG have seen a 78 % decrease in funding from last year and a

total funding decrease of 95% since 9/11. During these dramatic cuts the nation's violent crime rate increased for the first time in fifteen years, 2.3% in 2005 and 3.7% in 2006.

For Ohio the funding is represented as such, in CY 2001 Ohio received \$5.7 million dollars, supplementing 34 task forces at an average of \$147,264 dollars per task force. From CY 2003 through CY2005 Ohio received \$4 million dollars to supplement task forces. As this funding remained flat it did not take into account inflation, and was in fact a net reduction for the task forces. In CY 2006 Ohio received \$2.2 million dollars and funded 26 task forces at an average of 90,495 per task force, and it is projected that Ohio will receive \$1.2 million dollars to fund 27 task forces at an average of 44,444 per task force. In all, a reduction of federal funding to the State of Ohio of nearly 80%.

The Summit County Situation

